

Man, a Free Agent

Man is the highest creation of God and he has a free will to make his own decisions. God has shown him the right path, and the life of Prophet Muhammad provides a perfect example for achieving success and salvation. Islam stands for the sanctity of human person - ality and confers equal rights on all without distinction of race, nationality or sex. The law of God set down in the Qur'an and exemplified in the life of the Prophet is supreme in all cases. It applies equally to the prince and the pauper, the ruler and the ruled, the saint and the sinner.

Man's Accountability to God

Man's life is not limited to the short span of earthly existence. On the Day of Judgement, the entire human race will be resurrected; everyone will appear before Almighty God and face the consequences of his deeds in this life. Thus, life in the Hereafter is a continu - ation of our earthly life. Belief in man's accountability to God gives sense and meaning to life and differentiates human beings from animals and inanimate objects. It serves as a reminder against crime, corruption, immorality, and injustice.

Human Rights

Islam protects all noble values and human rights. Freedom, equality, justice, and the right to life, liberty, and the security of person are of prime concern in Islamic law.

" Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corrup- tion in the earth, it will be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso- ever saves the life of one, it will be i as if he had saved the life of all mankind Qur'an 5:32

There is no compulsion in religion. " Qur'an 2:256

Islam places great emphasis on social justice. It opposes all those who exploit, oppress and deal unjustly with people.

"O you who believe: Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity and let not hatred of any people seduce you that you deal not justly. Be just; that it nearer to piety " . Qur'an 5:8

Science and Technology

Islam encourages the use of science and the scientific method. Acquisition of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, male or female. In Islam, science and technology should be used for moral ends and serve the legitimate needs of mankind. Moreover, both are viewed as yet another means to understand and see the power and glory of God.

" He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth " . Qur'an 2:29

" It is your Lord, the Most Bount- eous, Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not ..." Qur 'an 96:2-5

" We shall show them Our Signs on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that it is the Truth ..." Qur'an 41:53

Islam: The Cure for Modern Ills

Racism is a major problem in many materially advanced countries. Prejudice and discrimination against racial groups is a common phenomenon even today. For 1400 years, Islam has shown in practice how racism can be ended.

The Islamic social scene, partic - ularly during the Hajj, is a unique example of the brotherhood of men of all races and nations under One God.

Similarly, the family, the basic unit of civil - ization, has also become something of a problem in the West. It is in visible decay. The family system of Islam brings the rights of husband, wife, children, and relatives into a fine equilibrium. Islam nourishes generosity in the family and holds it together under the clear Qur'anic laws and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Some Misconceptions About Islam

It is unfortunate that some teachings of Islam have been distorted and misrepresented in the West. The main distortions relate to the status of woman, marriage and divorce, Jihad or the so - called " holy war " , the authenticity of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the distinction between the Qur'an and Hadith. The accurate teachings of Islam on these matters can be obtained only from authentic Islamic writings. Some of these writings are listed below:

Some Useful Books on Islam

The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary by Abdulla Yusuf Ali Towards Understanding Islam * by Abul A'la Maududi Islam in Focus* by Hammudah Abdalati The Qur'an and Modern Science by Maurice Buchaille The Qur'an: Basic Teachings

Islam at a glance



Isl am and Muslim

Islam is an Arabic word which means peace, purity, acceptance and commitment. As a religion, Islam calls for complete acceptance of the teachings and guidance of God.

A Muslim is one who freely and willingly accepts the supreme power of God and strives to organize his life in total accord with the teachings of God. He also works for building social institutions which reflect the guidance of God. " Muhammadanism " is a misnomer for Islam and offends its very spirit since the Prophet Muhammad was a messenger of God, and not a divine being worshipped by Muslims.

Muslims use the word " Allah " for the , English word " God. " The understanding of Deity in Islam differs from some of the connotations in the English word, God. For the convenience of English speaking readers, the word God is used throughout this brochure except when the word " Allah " is in a quotation from the Qur'an.

Continuity of the Message

Islam is not a new religion. It is, in essence, the same message and guidance which God revealed to all His previous messengers.

" Say: We believe in Allah and that which was revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and to the Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinc - tion between any of them, and to Him we submit " . Qur'an 3:83

The message which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Islam in its comprehensive, complete and final form.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Every action that is done with the awareness that it fulfills the Will of God is considered an act of worship in Islam. But it is the specific acts of worship termed the Pillars of Islam which provide the framework of Muslim spiritual life. These are given below:

1. The declaration of faith. " I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except God (Allah) and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. " The Prophethood of Muhammad obliges Muslims to follow his exemplary life in every respect.

2. Prayers are prescribed five times a day as a duty towards God. Prayer strengthens and enlivens belief in God and inspires man to higher morality. It purifies the heart and controls temptation, wrong - doing, and evil.

3. Fasting during the month of **Ramadan**. This means abstaining from food, beverages, and sex from dawn to sunset, and curbing evil intentions and desires. It teaches love, sincer - ity, and devotion. It develops patience, , unselfishness, social conscience, and will - power to bear hardship.

4. Zakah is a proportionately fixed contri - bution collected from the wealth and earnings of the well - to - do and rich. It is spent on the poor and needy in particular, and the welfare of the society in general. The payment of Zakah purifies one's income and wealth and helps to establish economic balance and social justice in the society.

5. Hajj, or pilgrimage to the Ka'bah in Mecca. A Muslim is required to make the pilgrimage once in his lifetime if he is physically able and has the means to under - take the journey.

Oneness of God

Islam enjoins faith in the oneness and sovereignty of God, which creates an awareness of the unity and meaningfulness of the universe and of man's place in it. This belief frees him from all beliefs and superstitions by making him conscious of the presence of Almighty God and of man's obligations to Him. But this realization must be expressed and tested in action. Faith alone is not enough. Belief in one God requires that we look upon all humanity as one family under the universal omnipotence of God - the Creator and Nourisher of all. Islam rejects the idea that there is a " chosen people " making pure intention, faith in God, and good deeds the only way to heaven. Thus a direct relationship is established with God, open to all alike, without any discrimination or intercession.

The Qur'an and Hadith

The Qur'an is the last revealed word of God and the basic source of Islamic teachings and laws. It deals with a variety of subjects including the basic beliefs of Islam, morality, worship, knowledge, wisdom, the relation - ship between God and man as well as relations among human beings. Comprehensive teach - ings on which sound systems of social justice, politics, economics, legislation, jurisprudence, law and international relations can be built form an important part of the Holy Qur'an.

Though Prophet Muhammad did not receive a formal education, the Qur'an as soon as it was revealed to him in the spoken word, was committed to writing by his scribes.

In this way, every word was written down and preserved during his lifetime by his compan - ions. The original and complete text of the Qur'an is in Arabic and translations of its meaning in most languages are available in major libraries and bookstores.

Hadith - the teachings, sayings, and actions of Prophet Muhammad, accurately reported and collected by his devoted companions, explain and elaborate on the Qur'anic verses.

Concept of Worship

Islam does not teach ritualism. It places great emphasis on intention and action. To worship God is to love Him and to act upon His commands in every aspect of life, to enjoin goodness and forbid wrong - doing and oppression, to practice charity and justice and to serve Him by serving mankind. The Qur'an presents this sublime concept in the following manner:

" It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but a righteous person is one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets: and who gives wealth for love of Him to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and sets slaves free; and observes proper worship and pays the Zakah. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress; such are those who are sincere. Such are the God - fearing." Qur'an 2: 177